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RATIONAL ✧ MEDICINE ✧ AND  
CHARLATANRY.

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BY BURNSIDE FOSTER, M. D.

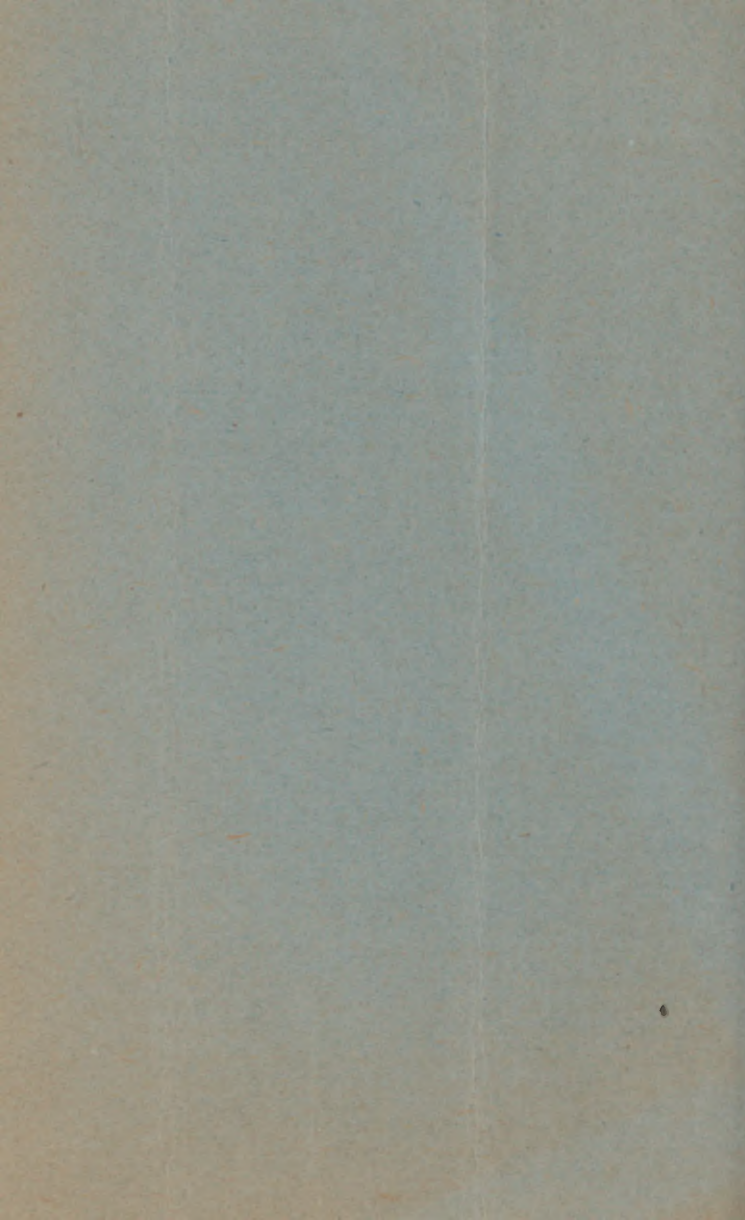
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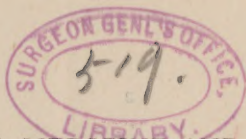
Surgeon to the Skin and Venereal Department of the St. Paul  
City and County Hospital; Dermatologist to St.  
Joseph's Hospital; Dermatologist to St.  
Luke's Hospital; Visiting Physician  
to the St. Paul Free Dispensary,

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RATIONAL MEDICINE AND CHARLATANRY.\*

BY BURNSIDE FOSTER, M. D.

Surgeon to the Skin and Venereal Department of the St. Paul City and County Hospital; Dermatologist to St. Joseph's Hospital; Dermatologist to St. Luke's Hospital; Visiting Physician to the St. Paul Free Dispensary,

The history of civilization would be incomplete did it not include the history of medicine, and the history of medicine must include the history of quackery. I do not propose within the limits of this essay to trace the descriptive history of quacks and quackery, volumes would be required for that purpose; but rather to describe quackery and some of its methods, to discuss the reasons for its existence as it has existed and as it does exist, and to look a little into its future, to see what hope there is that science, education and culture may prevail against it. Quackery will always flourish as long as it finds patrons and victims. Credulity and ignorance are its support; education, knowledge and truth are the weapons with which it must be fought. The history of every age or community of which we have any record shows us that in some rude way the study of diseases and their cause and treatment must have been almost contemporaneous with the dawn of human intellect; and medicine at first, encompassed and shrouded as it was by ignorance, mystery and superstition, has been slowly advancing through the centuries of the world's history, receiving, digesting, assimilating.

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ing or rejecting contributions from every department of human knowledge and experience, until it seems to give us fair promise of eventually deserving a place among the exact sciences. Disease, decay and death have always coëxisted with life, and the very earliest speculations and experiences of primitive man must have been associated with the arrangements and derangements of his bodily functions. Knowledge born only of experience did not exist at first, and naturally no explanation was attempted for diseased conditions, any more than for the various phenomena of inanimate nature. All was ascribed to the working of some divine supernatural agency. When communities began to have some sort of organization, certain individuals assumed or had ascribed to them the power to have dealings with the gods, and special divinities were believed to preside over the cure of disease. So it came to pass that the first medical men were priests.

They were not supposed to have knowledge of disease, but to be able to intercede with the special divinities for its cure. The rewards for the exercise of this power at first consisted of votive offerings of various kinds to the gods, later of gifts to the priests themselves. Next came the knowledge gained by chance that certain articles of food and drink, certain herbs and roots produced certain effects in health, and when similar effects seemed desirable in sickness such were used in medicines. The next step seems to have been that men other than priests began to treat the sick, and to study and observe diseases, to compare their experiences with each other and to be known as healers, or by some name which indicated them as medical men. In some such way as this, in the dawning days of man's history, medicine as a distinct calling had its beginning.

To the patient all was mysterious, with the phy-



sician all was empirical; and thus for many ages it remained, real progress toward truth being infinitely slow. To trace the history of the growth of medical knowledge among the early people who have left a history which we can read is an intensely interesting study, but cannot concern us here. We have to do with quackery, that miserable fungus which had its origin about the same time, which has grown and flourished with it, and which will always exist until ignorance and credulity cease to be the victims of dishonesty. Human nature, in its chief characteristics has changed but little since it has existed, and the parents of quackery were selfishness and dishonesty, two essentially human attributes. As soon as it became apparent to men at once shrewd and dishonest, that great gain could easily be acquired by selling a pretended knowledge of medicine to the sick, by boldly claiming to possess some wonderful and secret remedy, known only to its possessor, quackery began to flourish. At first there could have been little save motive and honesty of purpose to distinguish the honest men from the quacks, and the patient was quite as likely to recover in the hands of one as in the clutches of the other.

As medical science increased, as man began to observe and record facts in regard to anatomy and physiology, and to apply this knowledge of the performance of the bodily functions in health towards the relief of diseased conditions, as medicine became a recognized and honorable calling, a distinction became apparent between physicians and quacks and charlatans. Even the early physicians,\* prompted by humane and unselfish motives, regarded their calling as a noble and digni-

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\*The word physician in the course of this essay will be understood to mean an honest practitioner of medicine, as opposed to a quack.

fied one, and sought for truth and knowledge rather for the good of humanity than for private gain; and they endeavored to divest medicine of all the mystery and superstition which had hitherto surrounded it. On the other hand mystery and supersition were the proper cloaks of quackery, and its methods were shrouded by them. The early social history of every race and country which has left a history for us to read, records the growth of quackery and the often vain and ineffectual struggles of medicine as opposed to it. Nor is it surprising that when physicians honestly confessed their doubt, perhaps their ignorance, in certain cases, the sufferer should turn to the charlatan, who openly boasted of his pretended skill, who promised certain relief, and who gained of course the greater renown when by chance the patient recovered. If the patient died it was easy to tell the friends of sudden and unusual complications, that the case had been allowed to run too long, or that the treatment of the previous physician had destroyed the hope of recovery. One notable recovery shrewdly noised abroad accomplished far more to the charlatan's renown than would be counteracted by many failures, which could often be kept quiet or shrewdly accounted for. Quackery by no means necessarily implied ignorance on the part of him who practised it. In the early days of medicine when the known facts and truths were very few it was easy for the charlatan to be possessed of all the knowledge of the physician, and often to inspire his patient with a much greater confidence by boasting of his skill and hinting at some special knowledge mysteriously acquired. Those who took their medicine and recovered were always ready to believe that their lives had been marvelously preserved and were quite willing to sound the praise of their deliverers.

Such was the beginning of quackery and not very different are its methods today. It is easy to understand that, in times and among people when such knowledge as existed was confined to a comparatively few individuals, when there was very little attempt at intellectual culture, quacks and pretenders of all kinds should flourish and find support. Not so evident to find reason for their existence and success in later times and in our times. I shall not attempt to describe the many systems of quackery which have existed, or which do exist. Their history has been written and may be read by the curious. Let us now, rather, concern ourselves with quackery as an evil, which lives and which we permit to live; let us try to understand why it lives and see if we can suggest any means of repressing it if we cannot suppress it. I believe it to be an undoubted fact that in the minds of the most highly educated, the most intelligent and refined persons, there is no one subject upon which there exists so much ignorance, so much credulity, such apparent willingness to be deceived, as in matters pertaining to their physical existence; their anatomy, physiology and pathology. Very different the case with the other departments of knowledge, the other sciences. Most people of education and culture have more or less understanding of the technicalities of law, of politics, of social science, perhaps of natural science, and are able to read, to reason and to talk about them; but the medical sciences are a closed book. There seems to be a feeling of disgust in the minds of most people regarding their internal organs and their functions. The very names of anatomy and physiology are horrible. Medical schools, anatomical laboratories and hospitals are regarded with a morbid curiosity, but as places to be avoided. Admitted to be necessary, like slaughter



houses, and quite as repulsive.

Against this popular prejudice medicine has had to struggle for centuries. The first anatomists and physiologists pursued their investigations secretly, like criminals, and as such were often treated if discovered. Even today it is sometimes difficult to secure and maintain legislation to protect medical teachers and their students and to enable them to carry on certain departments of their work. It is not surprising then that there should exist much ignorance concerning medical matters in the minds of most persons not actively engaged in medical pursuits. Let us observe what is born of this ignorance.

First there is almost universal inability to judge correctly or to reason logically about matters pertaining to the cause or treatment of diseased conditions. Next comes credulity, belief in the mysterious or miraculous, and what seems in many persons a positive desire to be imposed upon and deceived. The more wonderful, the more marvelous, the more fantastic the methods of the charlatan, so much the more attractive are they often to the patient. Such credulity is by no means confined to simpleminded, uneducated people—to the lower or middle classes. Were quackery dependent for its support upon such victims as it could draw from these, it would soon starve. Education, even the highest, culture, the most refined, do not seem to give the power to discriminate between quackery and rational medicine. Men who will discuss learnedly complicated legal, commercial or political problems, whose minds on all other subjects are clear, logical and thoroughly informed, seem to lose entirely their reasoning faculties and their common sense when confronted with some question which has to do with their physical well being. No one would hesitate if he desired information or assistance upon some vexed



problem in astronomy, between the opinion of one known to be an educated astronomer, devoting his life to the study of his science, and that of some itinerant who owns a cheap telescope and will show you the stars and planets for a trifle. No one would hesitate were he going to cross the ocean between a vessel known to be staunch, piloted by a captain known to be familiar with the seas, and some flimsy craft directed only by an eccentric landsman who claimed the power to invoke such divine guidance and protection as would insure safe conduct. How often, on the other hand, is confidence reposed in the opinion and advice of the charlatan, who with little or no pretence of education, boasts of some secret remedy or method of treatment, obtained in this or that curious or mysterious way, and which is said to be unknown to medical science. Is it rational or sensible to believe that there should be knowledge of disease or its treatment in the private possession of one or two individuals, and yet unknown to men who make it the business of their lives to know all that is known of medicine? It is a matter of very common knowledge that chemistry, one of the most exact of sciences, can detect and weigh out the poisons hidden in the stomach or other organ of its victim; but for some reason it does not seem so commonly known, that the same science, always the willing servant of medicine, can accurately analyze the much vaunted potion of the charlatan and tell to a grain its contents. Strangely enough, however, it is often impossible to persuade a sensible, intelligent man, that there is the same virtue in a mixture compounded by a chemist, and containing exactly the same ingredients in the same quantities, that he has been accustomed to purchase in a differently shaped or colored bottle, gorgeously labeled, called by some cunningly devised name, and ac-

accompanied by much fascinating reading matter, which describes its wonderful curing powers and tells the numbers of people who have been restored to health by its use. He gladly pays—I hardly dare to say how many times—the value of the stuff rather than be undeceived. It is well known to physicians and chemists that most of the popular so-called patent medicines, contain familiar drugs, which have long been and are still in common use; often the original and favorite formula of some physician is given an attractive dress and “catchy” name, and if it is skilfully advertised and sufficiently extravagant claims are made for its marvelous properties, its commercial success is assured. In a certain proportion of cases where an immediate and definite effect upon some organ or function of the body is desired, the effect is produced; the medicine has fulfilled its promise and the sufferer who has gained the relief he sought will not believe that he could have gained it in any other way. In such cases no special harm, perhaps no harm at all, has been done. Many of the patent nostrums, however, the “bitters,” the “soothing syrups,” the “nerve tonics,” the “invigorators,” are known to contain dangerous drugs, and nearly all contain a varying quantity of alcohol, and there are few physicians whose experience has not brought them into contact with men and women whose lives have been wrecked by some fearful drug habit, acquired through the use of some preparation of, to them, unknown composition.

How often do we meet with some individual, of the strictest personal virtue, abstinent, perhaps a temperance agitator, who proclaims that the cause of all wickedness and evil is liquor, in whose eyes there are few more dreadful crimes than that of taking a drink, either in private or at a public bar, who finds it necessary for him, in order to have

the strength to carry on his arduous labors, to take several doses of his favorite "nerve tonic." It would, I think, surprise him very much, did he know that he was simply indulging in a "cocktail" to which there had been added a little morphia or a little cocaine, or some other drug which gives a pleasurable and stimulating sensation. In this form of quackery the personality of the quack does not appear. The patient makes his own diagnosis, the newspaper, the hand-bill or the circular received by mail, tells him what medicine he needs and how and where to get it. The revenue, often immense, goes to pay dividends on the stock of some wealthy corporation, or to swell the bank account of the individual owner of the medicine, whose name does not appear in the business and who is often a prominent and respected member of his community, conspicuous for his piety and charity; possibly giving generously out of his bounty towards the support of some asylum, which may contain among its unfortunate inmates some whose miserable plight has been brought about by the use of the very stuff which has given him his wealth.

Let us take a look at the methods of the more apparent and open quackery which flourishes without restraint, which is patronized, protected and supported by many of the most intelligent and most respected individuals of our communities.

Quacks are of different kinds; we can classify them; indeed, were it worth while we might divide them into a great number of species and varieties. For convenience I will content myself with making three classes, for we can under one or the other of these group all kinds of quacks: 1. Educated quacks. 2. Ignorant pretenders. 3. Misguided fanatics or "cranks."

Let us study a little in detail, the characteristics and methods of the individual quacks in each of

these three classes. To accurately define quackery so that all quacks would be included were as difficult as to frame a definition of insanity which included all insane persons. Educated quacks include those who began their career with dishonest purpose, having only in view the learning of a trade in which they were to measure their success by the shrewdness of the bargains in the traffic they hoped to carry on in human suffering; and the much larger number of those who began with honest purpose, but finding dishonesty more profitable adopted its methods. Our cities contain a large and rapidly increasing number of young men, many of them poor and perhaps with others than themselves to support, who are a part of the crop of variously educated (or uneducated) so-called doctors of medicine, which annually ripens and is garnered from the medical schools of the country. There are not a few such institutions, so-called schools of medicine, where it is quite as easy for a man to obtain his diploma as it would be to obtain a business situation, and when he has obtained it there is often no way for the public to discriminate between his qualifications and those of a man who has been thoroughly educated. The degree of Bachelor of Arts, which carries no responsibilities with it, is much more difficult to obtain and means a considerable amount of study and at least a tolerably liberal education. Many of these young men after a few months or years of enforced idleness, unable to earn enough for a comfortable support, make up their minds that in order to gain a sufficient livelihood they must depart from honest ways and stoop for the dollars which come so easily to dishonesty and quackery. Pick up the morning paper and read the cunningly worded advertisement of Dr. ———— who guarantees to cure you of any disease, and who can make you believe



that you are at this moment unconsciously possessed of some one of the diseases, the symptoms of which he so accurately describes. Call at his office during business hours and see the crowds waiting to see him. If you could get a peep at his mail I think you would be surprised to read the names that are signed to the letters he receives, from so and so, or so and so, men and women who are prominent in your community and whom you have been accustomed to regard as intelligent and sensible people. I dare say you all know cases of lawyers, statesmen, clergymen, even scientists who believe that they have been cured of some disease from which they have long suffered and for the relief of which they have finally resorted to some notorious charlatan, and are now well. No matter how logical a mind that man may have he will never be persuaded that the argument, "post hoc, ergo propter hoc," is the fallacy which has given him so much comfort and satisfaction. The more mysterious and incomprehensible the nature of his real or supposed malady, the more fantastic and unique the method of treatment, so much the more does he believe in it. Is it to be wondered at that many a young man who has struggled bravely and honestly for a while should be tempted, when he sees how easily wealth may be acquired by such methods, to prostitute himself in like manner? The quacks of the class we are describing, being often men who have considerable education and experience, understand well the nature of the diseases for which they are consulted and in the majority of cases they treat their patients as physicians would; but the treatment being disguised and made fascinating by the addition of various fantastic or striking devices, seems wonderful and is so much the more attractive to the patient. If the case is one of the ordinary acute illnesses of life, the patient is quite likely to

recovery in the hands of the educated quack, for he is too knowing to prescribe any doubtful or harmful treatment. Such, however, are not the cases which the quack seeks or which give him his fattest fees and his greatest renown. His chosen victim is the man who for some reason or other has afflicted himself with some fancied malady, who has brooded over it and become depressed, and who after reading all the vicious literature of which quackery is so lavish, is at last attracted to some of its authors. How easy to persuade this poor fellow, who needs no medicine save a little wholesome, truthful advice and information, that he is afflicted with some insidious and dreaded disease. Cunningly drawn out by the quack who suggests this symptom or that sensation, which perhaps the patient had not thought of, the story is soon told, the picture of the disease complete. Consumption, incipient insanity, internal cancer, decay of this or that organ: some such spectre is shown him in its most horrid form, and his ignorance and credulity place him completely at the mercy of the shrewdness of the quack. The next inquiry is usually into the circumstances of the patient, and the duration of the treatment, the length of time needed for a "cure," will depend upon the amount of money that he can afford to pay. Here at least is one of the circumstances of life where the advantage is on the side of the poor man, for he will get well much more rapidly than the well to do. Such and similar instances, and they are of daily occurrence in our cities, explain the many wonderful cures of which we read and hear so much. The study of hypnotism and the effects of suggestion upon the minds and bodies of certain individuals, although at present by its most earnest students but little understood, has of late years developed a most curious and interesting collection of facts, and per-

haps it will give us a little light, and help us to understand some of the reasons for the very prevalent belief in miraculous medicine. Charcot and others have demonstrated that sleep can be induced by suggestion, that pains and sensations can be suggested, that the functions of the body can be made to operate and that the effects of drugs may be produced by suggestion alone. Crimes committed through suggestion have already raised a new question in criminal law. I will not attempt, even were I able, to discuss or explain these phenomena—it is enough for my purpose to state the fact of their existence.

The physical and mental qualities concerned have always existed, but it is only through the experiments and observations of very recent investigators that we have been able even faintly to appreciate their meaning. A moment's thought will show what a powerful element the existence of this psychical condition must be in all dealings with the sick, and what a fearful instrument it becomes in dishonest hands. Every honest physician knows that there are times when he must deceive his patient, when plain water must be substituted for a solution of morphia, when it is wiser to order a "placebo" than to prescribe nothing, when the fact that there exists some fatal disease must be concealed or denied. Not strictly honest, indeed, but the sternest moralist would hardly condemn it. It is not surprising then that the charlatan having gained the confidence of his patient, having demonstrated that the supposed disease really exists, finds it easy to produce the results which he predicts and to inspire a belief that some wonderful agent is at work driving the malady away. The chief agent through which the quack reaches his victim is the press, not alone the newspaper press, but the universal free press which is at the disposal, without restraint, of all

who can pay for its services. The art of printing more than all the other arts combined, has advanced knowledge and culture, and the freedom of the press is a necessary adjunct of modern civilization. Being but the reflection of human thought and human schemes it will be put to evil uses so long as humanity and evil coëxist. That which is printed, to most people, carries much greater conviction than that which is spoken. A doubtful or unusual statement told by one man to another will usually provoke argument, and reason and sense will cause the absurdity to be rejected. A printed statement perhaps hastily read, equally as absurd and unreasonable, will often pass unchallenged, there being no one on hand with whom to discuss it, and remaining in the mind of the reader, is quite likely to be accepted as a truth. The pamphlet, circular or newspaper column of the educated quack, often well and attractively written, carries conviction to many minds which would reject its absurd and impossible statements were they received one at a time, by word of mouth, and examined more carefully by the light of reason and common sense. Such literature need not be sought, it is even difficult to avoid it. We meet it in the columns of the daily or weekly journals, it comes to us individually through the mails, or some enthusiastic friend forces it upon us. The columns of the religious journals are particularly valuable for advertisements of this class and are always at their disposal. The newspaper press has thus become a very powerful protector and champion of quackery. An enormous diminution in the advertising income of the daily, weekly, or monthly papers and journals would result from the withdrawal from their columns of the advertisements of the patent nostrums and devices for the treatment of various diseases, or of the personal advertisements of the innumerable



charlatans who rival each other in the ingenuity and boldness of their claims to be able to cure all diseases, and who are thus enabled to keep their names constantly before the public. Every business man knows how essential to the success of all commercial enterprise is the skilful use of the art of advertising. The more unique, the more novel, the more attractively worded, the more cleverly designed to catch the reader's eye, so much the more successful in its results.

None are more appreciative of the value to their trade of advertising methods, none more lavish in their patronage of advertising mediums than the quacks and the vendors of patent medicines. It would be folly to expect then, particularly under the existing conditions of popular knowledge and opinion on the subject of quackery, that the newspaper should use its influence against, or do other than to protect that which is commercially, to it so profitable. It is not claimed that, before publishing the merchant's advertisement of certain wares which he has for sale and which he describes as giving unusual value for a small price, the newspaper should first investigate the truth of the statements, in order that its readers may not be deceived. The newspaper makes no comments, assumes no responsibility for the truth of what its advertising columns contain, and beyond excluding palpable and undisguised immoralities and criminal business propositions, its columns are open to all who can pay for their use. Occasionally when public attention has been called to some flagrant instance of the results of quackery, either the death of some prominent individual or because of some peculiarly outrageous circumstances connected with the case, there will be an editorial comment, deploring the fact that such criminal practices are permitted, condemning the medical profession or the public servants whose

duty it should be to make and to enforce laws for the public protection; and the other columns of the paper will be filled with advertisements of the very things which the editorial is condemning. It is rare, however, that a politic journal will venture to incur the wrath and take the risk of losing the business of its most lucrative patrons. Much more commonly do we read editorially concerning the narrow-mindedness and bigotry of the "old school physicians" who are seeking to secure medical legislation to regulate the practice of medicine and who, prompted only by envy and jealousy are endeavoring to persecute their more successful rivals. Indeed, it is quite commonly believed that because, as is often the case, the various irregular practitioners attract more patients and gain larger incomes than the average physician, the latter seek, solely for their own interests and protection, to interfere with their business. It is difficult in this commercial age of ours when the first object of nearly every calling or occupation is personal gain, and individual success is measured by individual income, for the public to understand that there should be any ethical or other reason for regarding medicine and its legitimate methods in any other than a mere business or commercial light. They cannot understand why physicians should not advertise their skill as merchants advertise their goods, or why they immediately regard with disfavor the practitioner of whom they know nothing further than that he makes himself known to the public through the press. Human nature is, of course, the same among all classes of educated men: save for such natural modifications as special training may develop, and such qualities and methods of thought as special occupations and experiences may bring out; and physicians being no less human than other men are no less possessed of human

attributes and faults. Selfishness and dishonesty, to a greater or less degree, are human attributes and as such are no less evident among physicians than among those other callings which are on the same intellectual level. The profession of medicine, however, to those who in its legitimate practice are brought through it into constant contact with all kinds of suffering humanity, does develop, I believe, more than any other calling, unless it be the clerical, that virtue which in its best and broadest sense is the noblest and rarest of virtues—Charity. Not alone the charity which prompts to help a fellow man in trouble, but the charity which finds excuse for his failings and short-comings, and which forbids to take advantage of his ignorance and simplicity. Humanity is at the mercy of its physician when his services are needed, much more completely than in its dealings with any other of its fellows. Hence among those who were the first to establish the ethics of medicine, it was considered dishonest and undignified to have or to profess to have any secret methods, or to publicly profess special skill for the treatment and cure of disease.

The tangible articles of commerce, the commodities which the merchant advertises, the would be purchaser may examine for himself, and their value or worth he is usually capable of estimating, at least approximately. They may prove spurious or inferior to the claims of the advertiser, but the loss is comparatively trivial, the cheat is soon discovered and no great harm has been done. How different the ability of the sufferer who seeks for help in what may be the greatest emergency of his life, to discriminate between those who flaunt their boasts of special knowledge of the particular disease and special ability to cure it. It requires no other than a knowledge of the language of the community and the ability to write it fluently, not

even always that, for it is easy to hire such ability, to enable a man of no medical knowledge or experience to acquire a notoriety among the people, which shall induce many when their lives are threatened by disease, to blindly put their faith in some ignorant pretender. There are, naturally, very varying degrees of knowledge and skill among those who practice legitimate medicine. Unfortunately owing to the present condition of medical education in some parts of the world of which I shall speak presently more in detail, there are legitimate practitioners of very little medical knowledge. Many a man, too, for this or that accidental reason, gains a reputation for unusual skill and ability which perhaps is not entirely deserved, which may have come to him through social or other circumstances dependent upon his environments; but physicians recognizing the grave responsibilities with which their profession calls them to deal and the fearful danger to human life when its diseases are entrusted to the ignorant, long ago wisely decided that the welfare of the community as well as the dignity of their profession could be better assured if the people selected their physicians through personal and individual knowledge of their ability or on account of their justly acquired reputation, than if their choice were influenced through some attractively worded and pretentious advertisement the truth of which could neither be disputed nor demonstrated.

Much of the disrepute into which medicine often falls is caused by the inability of the average man to appreciate the difference between honest and legitimate practice and quackery; and part of it I regret to state, is due to the existence in legitimate or apparently legitimate practice of a considerable number of ignorant and dishonest men who have gained their medical degree through what I



can only describe as illegitimate methods. I mean by that, at least as far as the ignorant are concerned, that they have bought a degree of doctor of medicine, which the law recognizes, from some diploma factory which should have no existence in an intelligent and well ordered community. It will be as difficult to eliminate dishonesty from medicine as from humanity, but ignorance and illegitimacy in modern communities are usually so controlled by wise legislation, that they are prevented from doing more than a minimum of harm.

We do not allow incompetent pilots or engineers to assume the responsibility of conducting human freight, or even inanimate freight, in their journeys either on sea or land. Men demand the very highest skill and knowledge in those who are responsible for the safety and protection of their property; and indeed, in all other affairs of life, in those who have their personal safety in charge. Strange that when the greatest of dangers threaten them, they demand and are content with so little. Even when some notorious pretender has sacrificed a human life, there is usually less attempt to punish the criminal negligence or ignorance than if from some other ignorance or neglect a few thousand dollars worth of property has been destroyed. Suits for malpractice to recover damages for injuries resulting from improper, neglectful or ignorant treatment are, as is well known, much more commonly brought against physicians than against quacks. Partly, I suppose because the quacks are more cunning in their methods of shifting the responsibility and partly because in the minds of some of the patrons of quackery there is a disinclination to publicly avow that they have allowed themselves to be duped. They are willing and eager to announce to all their friends that they have been cured by this or that charlatan or wonderful nostrum, but in case no relief or

even actual harm has resulted, they, possessing that very human failing, unwillingness to admit a mistake or an error of judgment, do not care to have the fact known. Very different when a physician loses a patient, or when the recovery is unsatisfactory, whether a case of some disease which is necessarily fatal, or whether through some unforeseen calamity, or whether through some neglect which he honestly confesses, there is no hesitation about discussing his failure, shortcoming or neglect. If the calamity has been caused by his neglect, as sometimes happens, he is likely to reproach himself for the rest of his life, whereas the same occurrence in the hands of a quack, if he has shrewdly explained the unforeseen result, is soon forgotten.

It may be said of the second class into which I have divided quacks, the ignorant pretenders, I have already alluded to their methods, that as a class their field for doing harm is more limited than that of their educated brothers. Conscious of their ignorance, they do not seek and often refuse to take cases where even the most ignorant of them can detect the presence of serious disease; they are too shrewd to risk their reputation. Neither do they come so often into contact with the educated and cultured of the community, for their ignorance is usually apparent to the intelligent, who may be attracted to them once, but whom their personality repels. They are apt to be itinerants or vendors of some one or two special "cure alls," usually of harmless composition, and while their methods are similar to those of all quacks, they deal chiefly with the suggested diseases which only exist in the imagination of the patient, and which are apt to disappear very soon after the medicine is taken. In those less frequent cases, where either from unusual recklessness or because their ignorance has prevented

them from recognizing that they are dealing with actual and grave disease, these are the most dangerous quacks. Many lives have been unnecessarily lost or ruined through their boldly attempting to treat diseases of which they know nothing, with drugs of which they know less, or through their neglect of the often simple measures which, if properly used, might have saved the patient.

The third class of quacks, and it is much more distinct as a class than the other two, is represented in all of our communities by a most varied and motley throng. Its individuals are prompted by various motives and are by no means all dishonest. Among those whom I shall designate, for want of a better name, as misguided fanatics or "cranks," I place the Christian Scientists, the Faith healers, the "Layers on of hands," the Spiritualists, in short, all those who believe or pretend to believe that it is only right to invoke divine or extra mundane influences against the physical ills of man. A considerable number of those who profess such or similar doctrines are entirely honest, and not unfrequently among the "healers" will be found those who are prompted by no base motives, no desire for gain, but who believe that they have been inspired to relieve human suffering. Some kind of superstition is, to a greater or less extent, present in most human minds, at least during some moments of their lives. Whatever the religious belief of a thinking man, however definite or indefinite his ideas of God, of a personal or an impersonal Power who controls and is omnipotent, and whose creatures we are, be the man atheist, agnostic, a believer or an unbeliever, to whatever extent, the experiences of his daily life bring to his observation, more or less, according to his observing and thinking powers, existing forces which cannot be explained by any knowledge or understanding which has yet

been vouchsafed to man. To all of us some of the forces of nature, the laws which have combined to make the universe what it is, can only be a source of speculation and wonder; to some of us all is speculation and wonder. Naturally, then, there is a very varying belief in the exact amount of interference in human affairs, of some extra mundane power, of which we can know nothing. To very different degrees, too, are such beliefs cultivated by different forms of religion. Let me not be suspected of presuming to criticize any church or religious teaching, for such is not my purpose. To those who have faith not only in the helpful influence of prayer, but that the prayers of the faithful for special divine interference in time of danger will be answered, it is as natural to believe that prayer will cure the sick or will avert a pestilence, as that it will cause the rain to fall in the time of drought, or that it will keep away the storm in the season of harvest. It was once universally believed that disease and all afflictions were but instances of divine chastening. There are many who believe it now, modifying their beliefs in various ways. Some go so far as to believe that each individual affliction is a special instance of divine purpose, to be patiently endured until such time as through faithful intercession, or by evidence of some change of heart on the part of the offender, the Almighty sees fit to send relief. Some even believe that it is wrong to accept human aid in the relief of suffering. An instance of this is seen among those who refuse the relief which modern science offers in anæsthesia, from the pains of childbirth, because a wise God has seen fit to afflict maternity with pain, and it is interfering with His plans to attempt to escape from it. Others, while admitting that it is man's right to use the knowledge which has been gained through his intellectual capacity,



—else why is he possessed of intellect?—to gain relief from the ills which afflict him, still believe that such knowledge will only avail when it is the will of Him who rules that it should. Without implying the least irreverence, I cannot but suggest that such belief must be very comforting to the physician whose patient has died in spite of his faithful and skillful care, and must give the most complete protection to the ignorant pretensions of the quack. There being then, in all communities, many who cling to such faith, there are many individuals who make special pretensions to be able to intercede with the divinity who alone has power to restore to life and health. Some, as I have said honest in their belief, the others seeing only an opportunity to gain wealth by practising upon the credulity of the faithful. It is so common that it often passes without, or with but little, remark, to hear of a death from some disease where the patient has received no treatment but the prayers or incantations of a Christian Scientist or a Faith healer. Is it not sometimes shocking to those who love Christ that his name should be allowed to cloak such ignorance, such folly, such wickedness? There being so many opportunities for the dishonest who have sufficient knowledge of human simplicity, and sufficient shrewdness to assume an appearance of wisdom which can easily impose upon the credulous, those who love medicine as an honorable and dignified calling have attempted to distinguish in certain ways its methods from those of the other businesses of life, proudly conscious that as a profession there is none more noble, that as a trade there can be no meaner.

Medicine through its practitioners and teachers can do much toward the abolishing of quackery, but unaided by the more thoughtful and broad-minded of the educated men in the other walks

of life, its efforts will avail but little. Medicine must labor for the elevation of its standards and methods of education, wise legislation must demand of those who would practise medicine suitable evidence of their fitness; and the education of the people must be such that they will become better able to exercise wise judgment in regard to matters pertaining to their physical life. The condition of medical education and the medical profession in our country is just now being made the subject of much and thoughtful consideration by those who hope and seek for its elevation. I will not say that the medical profession is degenerating nor deny that scientifically medicine steadily advances, as steadily in our country as in all countries. I do insist, however, that among the rapidly increasing number of men who have obtained in some manner the degree of doctor of medicine, there are many, very many, who are in no sense fitted for the responsibilities they would assume, for the positions of trust in which they may be placed. The reason for this is not far to seek. Many of the medical schools, and of the institutions which have the power to grant medical diplomas, exist only in the interests of those who directly or indirectly derive pecuniary benefit from them and are entirely dependent for their support upon the fees of the students whom they can attract. The natural tendency then is to make it seem easy, to actually make it easy, for a young man who is about to choose his life work to enter the profession of medicine. Often with the mere rudiments of, occasionally with absolutely no, previous education, tempted by the thought of being able after perhaps one or two or three short years of easy work, to acquire the privilege of engaging in what seems a lucrative and easy occupation, many a youth who would make a good farmer, mechanic or tradesman, is

persuaded to enter the most convenient medical school. After a longer or shorter time he finds himself possessed of the coveted diploma which allows him the undisputed right to sign his name with the added initials M. D. He has entered the ranks of that profession which is of all the most responsible, which to the welfare of mankind is the most important, and which should be the most elevated and the most difficult to enter. Those who have invested their entire capital in the bit of parchment which describes in Latin, which, perhaps, they cannot read, their professional qualifications, unable at first to gain by legitimate means sufficient income to supply their wants, are likely sooner or later to find themselves confronted with these alternatives: They must either stoop to dishonest and illegitimate methods, the rewards of which seem very tempting, or they must turn from a calling in which they are so manifestly misplaced to some more appropriate occupation in which, finding their intellectual level, they may become useful citizens and earn an honest and sufficient livelihood. The condition of medical education which permits such wrong is responsible in the one case to the public which it has injured by reinforcing the ranks of quackery; in the other, to the individual whom it has defrauded of the time and money he has wasted.

At a recent gathering of the alumni association of one of the oldest, most powerful and most advanced medical schools in our country, the chief subject of discussion was the wisdom of its recent action in establishing a four years' course of required study for its graduates in medicine. One of the guests of the association who took part in the discussion, himself a distinguished teacher in another university and a physician whose well earned reputation is known throughout the medical world, questioned the wisdom of lengthening

the required course of study on the ground that it would endanger the classes, that it would reduce the number of students; in his own words, that it would "break the backs of the best schools." I maintain that its very best results would be in the reduction of the number of students by eliminating those who are much more suited to engage in other occupations than the practice of medicine. Doubtless, at first the schools requiring the highest standard would drive many away from their gates to those of the lower grade schools; but the higher intellectual material composing the students of the former, with the increased amount of training which could be given in the longer period of study would amply compensate, if, indeed, there were need of compensation. The other schools would in time have to follow in the march of improvement, or "break their backs" in the attempt. To one who considers the crowded ranks of medicine and the many who are evidently for whatever reason unfit and unqualified to safely and successfully compete in the struggle for existence, it must appear that nothing but good can come of any method which shall at once diminish the quantity and improve the quality. The process of evolution in medicine, as in nature, must result in the survival of the fittest, and such efforts only as tend to that result can rightly be said to aid its progress in the direction of advancement. When the time shall come that the fact that a man has obtained the degree of doctor of medicine is a sufficient guarantee that he is an educated physician, that laying his personal qualities aside, he may be safely trusted by all who shall apply to him for the treatment of their diseases, a very great step towards the abolishment of quackery will have been taken. Were such the case there would, perhaps, be little need of the legislation which physicians are now trying to

secure, and of which I shall presently speak, to protect the public from being duped and worse than duped by the hordes of charlatans and pretenders whom their ignorance and credulity now encourage and support.

The legislation to which I refer is the establishing of boards of medical examiners in every state, who shall thoroughly and impartially scrutinize all who apply for the privilege of practising medicine under the protection of its laws. It seems strange that it should be so difficult to persuade people that the same precaution should be taken in giving license to those desiring to assume the responsibilities of the care of human life when threatened with disease as in licensing other men who assume responsibilities which involve the safety of life or property at other times or in other ways. Were such boards of licensers and examiners established in all our states, and tolerably uniform in their scrutiny of applicants to practise, requiring evidence of certain definite qualifications, the medical schools whose graduates failed to meet such requirements would either raise their standards or be forced out of existence. Much good work is now being done in both of these ways. Many of our most progressive schools of medicine are raising their standards of work, lengthening their required term of study and selecting more carefully their matriculates. Many states have already established, others are preparing to establish, such examining boards as I have alluded to, and where such boards have existed for only a few years, as in Minnesota, which was the pioneer in this direction, and where they have been properly protected and sustained in the performance of their duties, the good effect has been made manifest. In order that our legislative bodies and those who conduct our affairs of state, and who have no more important duty to



perform than that of protecting its citizens, shall be guided to the framing of wise medical legislation, they must be composed of men who have the knowledge and sense to appreciate the danger of indiscriminately licensing all who may desire to practise medicine, as well as of men who have the honesty to resist the bribes of those whose trade such legislation would destroy. It will be long, I suppose, before honesty becomes a controlling element in politics, but there is no question that higher education is having a constantly increasing effect in elevating, intellectually at least, the deliberations and actions of our legislative bodies. We must demand, then, of those who conduct the affairs of general education that there shall be more attention paid to those departments of knowledge, more instruction in such matters of history and science as shall result in equipping the graduates of our universities and high schools with more information and better reasoning powers concerning their material, their physical existence and well being. I do not mean that they should be taught medicine, but that they should be taught to recognize medicine as a learned profession, and that they should be made to realize that there can be no actual knowledge of disease, no ability to treat it, however extravagantly such may be claimed, not possessed by those who are regular and recognized members of that profession. They should be taught that there is no secret or mysteriously acquired or intuitive knowledge of medicine any more than that there is such knowledge of astronomy or chemistry. Liberal education, then, if it comprehended such knowledge as I have suggested, which is by no means now the case, would take from quackery its most valuable and powerful support, and the possessors of such education would become as active in opposing and seeking to destroy it as many of them now

are in patronizing and protecting it. If the majority of the members of our state legislatures were men of such education there would be little difficulty in persuading them to establish and to furnish with the proper authority and power examining boards to regulate medical practice.

Modern civilization and culture irrespective of creed, gratefully and without reserve acknowledge their constantly accumulating debt, a debt which could hardly be itemized, to the church, and to the religion of Christianity. Without touching upon the other functions and duties of the church, for our present purpose let us view only its power as an educator, or perhaps better as a disseminator of education and knowledge. To very many persons there can be no stronger argument to cause them to accept as truth, not to be disputed, a statement or a theory, than the often eloquent and forcible declamation of the pulpit. The motives too, of pulpit teachings, whatever may be sometimes the case with regard to their logic, are always the purest and the best, having almost invariably in view no other purpose than the honest desire to elevate and to strengthen those to who they are addressed. To the church, as a profession, belongs, indisputably, the high honor that its followers, much less than in any other calling, have selfish ends in view, or a desire for worldly gain. We have good reason to hope that when in common with the other class of men who receive the benefit of a higher education, the clergy have their eyes more fully open to the existence of quackery, and to the evil that it does, they will be ready to enlist their services in the crusade against it. I marvel greatly that the so-called spiritual and Christian healers, and others of like ilk, who borrow protection from the teachings of the church, whose methods are such a wretched travesty upon the religion which they pretend to be a

part of, should be unmolested, even tolerated by most preachers of Christianity. Even though not actually sanctioned by the church, or perhaps regarded with indifference, if regarded at all, these mongers of a bastard faith will still find dupes from among all sorts of people, until the church shall rise and openly denounce the folly and wickedness of such ignorance, such blasphemy.

It is not for me to deny, or to affirm, the efficacy of prayer, far less is it mine to seek to lessen the peace and comfort which it brings to millions of suffering mortals, when perhaps there is no other comfort left; but who dares to teach that it is the wish of Him to whom prayer is addressed that His creatures, refusing all human efforts in their extremities, shall put their faith in prayer alone? It seems to me little short of actual crime to allow a helpless creature to battle with disease unaided save by the so called prayers of some ignorant fanatic. I believe that it is this form of quackery, for while admitting that there are some who are sincere and honest in their belief in it, I can call it nothing else, which the church can do more to stamp out than can be done by any secular influence; and is it not a work which appeals to those whose chosen duty is to better and to help mankind? Although in very many respects differing greatly in their personality and in their methods of thought, one quality, one virtue, common to physicians and to the clergy, brings them often together at the bedside of the sick, and particularly among the poor. That charity which joins the hands of medicine and the church when the services of either or of both are needed, will surely not be wanting in this work, in which medicine appeals to the church for help and seeks to demonstrate how and why such help is needed. The task will lie in forcing this matter upon the attention of the clergy so that they will see it in its

proper light. Once persuaded of the occasion for their help, we shall find the clergy, here as at all other times a warm and powerful co-laborer. The chief reasons for the apathy shown by the more intellectual of all classes towards the existence of quackery are that its evils are not brought to their attention in such a way as to make them fully appreciated; and further that the early education of those who have the opportunity and the ability to aid in this much needed reform has not been such as to enable them to distinguish quackery from rational medicine.

I have attempted without going into detailed descriptions of the many systems and methods of the charlatans to explain what quackery is and what it does, and show in a general way that there can be no knowledge of disease save such as has been acquired like all other knowledge by honest, patient, laborious study, and that such knowledge is never secret but may be acquired by all who have the courage to persevere in its pursuit. Those who make pretensions to secret knowledge of medicine, by their very claims assume the garb of quackery. While making a definite and broad distinction between honest medicine and quackery, I have frankly admitted that in order to maintain and make manifest this distinction there must needs be radical changes in the present condition of medical education and in the present relations between the medical profession and the public. The gates of the profession should by no means be open to all who knock, but they should be guarded by those who will demand of all who seek to enter and to enjoy its privileges and its protection, ample evidence of their fitness to assume its duties and its responsibilities. Furthermore I have tried to show wherein the methods of liberal education are deficient in neglecting such instruction and training as would enable those whom it adorns to

distinguish the pretensions of quackery from medicine, imperfect and fallible though it be, yet modestly conscious of and honestly acknowledging its imperfections.

The modern tendency is towards coöperation and the division of labor, and as a result all occupations and professions become more and more mutually dependent; and their individual welfare demands that in all things they shall consider each other's interests, that their common interests may prosper. While admitting that quackery to some extent diminishes the legitimate income of the physician, although not to the extent generally supposed, for physicians are often called to repair the damages of quacks, the greatest harm to medicine is the ill repute into which it often falls, the loss of dignity which it sustains through the dishonest methods of the quacks and pretenders. By no means do I assert that philanthropy is the sole motive which prompts physicians in their warfare against quackery. There is a selfish motive, but it is a noble selfishness born rather of their love for their profession and their desire to free medicine of this offensive parasite, and to see it honored as it should be, than of the mere desire for individual gain; and if there is as an occasional motive a more ignoble selfishness, who shall condemn the just resentment of that man who has acquired by slow and painful labor the knowledge and skill which is perhaps his only capital, and by the honest use of which he seeks to gain his livelihood, and who sees the boastful pretensions of the charlatan gaining the reward which public credulity is so ready to bestow! Medicine makes no extravagant claims of superiority, asks no special privileges, but it does seek to guard jealously its honor and it claims the common right of all to protect its interests, and when it can be made evident that in this warfare against dishonesty and



quackery, the interests of society at large are as much, or even more at stake, medicine asks and expects the active assistance and support of the other learned professions and of all intelligent thinking men. The spirit of medical ethics which not only forbids physicians to advertise, but which makes them shrink from all publicity in regard to their achievement, is a frequent source of comment among the laity. Why should a physician or surgeon, who has by some bold and novel procedure, remarkable for its originality, cured, perhaps saved the life of, a patient, object to having the matter discussed in the newspaper? It is not because of any desire to keep it secret, because if it is of sufficient importance it is at once reported to the medical society and published in the medical journal. It is not because of personal modesty, for *rara avis* indeed is he who objects to being known through his good works. There are, however, reasons, and although there is difference of opinion among physicians in regard to them, I believe they are good reasons. The public press is not the place to discuss the technicalities of medicine and surgery, for those who write for it are of course unable to discuss such matters correctly, and when physicians discuss them, there are journals whose columns may be read by all who are interested and which are devoted solely to medicine. Furthermore, if it were permitted in certain cases of special interest to have reporters present at surgical clinics to describe for the readers of their journals the operations there performed, there would soon cease to be any hesitation among physicians to use the press as an advertising medium, and I have already given reasons why this is unwise and undesirable. Medical and surgical skill are not commodities of trade to be publicly advertised and exposed for sale, to be examined and bartered for as one buys groceries or

shoes, for those who need them have no power to discriminate among the self vaunted claims of their possessors. It is often asked if physicians do not advertise how a stranger is to know whom to go to, whom to trust. I repeat that it is safer to rely upon the reputation which a man has earned in his community, upon the knowledge of his personal character than to select a medical adviser because he has bought his reputation by publicly announcing his skill and his attainments. Surely if physicians all advertised it would be no more easy to tell the good from the bad, than if advertising were left solely to the quacks; and by leaving it to the quacks, medicine separates itself distinctly from them. I cannot quite comprehend why it is so difficult to make people understand the necessity for this distinction, but that they do not or will not understand it, is no reason why physicians should change from what they believe to be right to what they are sure is wrong.

A curious phase of public feeling in regard to physicians is shown in times of sudden emergency which menaces the public health; as for instance when there is the threatened danger of an impending epidemic--such an occasion is fresh in the minds of all--or when a community is suddenly afflicted with the scourge of contagious disease. There is no question then as to where the people turn for advice and help. Why do they not put their trust in the boasted knowledge of the charlatan, or in the spiritual aid which the Christian Scientist has power to invoke? I will not attempt to answer this question, but the fact that they do not, remains. If it is the honest educated physician who is appealed to at such times, and when as usually happens, the disease is most prevalent and most fatal among the poor, it is the physician, not the quack, who sacrifices his times perhaps his life, with no expectation of reward, often not even

that of gratitude, in their behalf. Surely it may be said that medicine is not, at least is not always, selfish in its motives. I have hitherto purposely refrained from individual comment or criticism upon any of the special systems of quackery, preferring to discuss the subject more broadly and in the abstract. I will, however, somewhat briefly allude to one human malady which furnishes many victims to the quacks, and which at the present time in this country, is contributing millions to the most gigantic and cruel system of charlatanry of which I have any knowledge. I refer to drunkenness; not alone dyspomania, but including the various kinds of intoxication produced by other drugs than alcohol. The habit of intoxication furnishes at once the most familiar and most dreadful examples of human misery among all classes of people. That the habit becomes itself a disease and that it induces other diseases; that those afflicted with it beget and bring forth a diseased progeny are facts not to be disputed. The disease of intoxication, however, being purely psychical, with none but subjective manifestations, is not to be cured by drugs any more than the disease of the imbecile or the kleptomaniac. Many a drunkard has been, many a drunkard will be cured, but the strength to overcome his desire for drink has not been injected subcutaneously nor has it been received in drops or capsules. To delude the victims of this disease, their families and friends, with the promise that some mysterious fluid contains the secret of their cure, to furnish them, as is commonly done, under some disguise, the very drug which has been the cause of their misery, to take their money and give them worse than nothing in return, this seems to me a crime for which no name has yet been invented. So far as I know there is not a community in this country where it

is not a legalized privilege to commit this and similar crimes.

I have said that many a drunkard has been cured, and I am aware that many a drunkard has left the "Drink cure institute" and left his habit behind him, some for a short time, some for all time. That the medicine he has there received has cured him is as true as that the holy water or the communion wine has changed the moral nature of a wicked man who has been brought through the influence of the church to lead a better and a purer life. The cure of a confirmed drunkard depends upon conditions which mostly lie within himself. Given the desire to be cured and the moral courage to resist the habit, the drunkard will be helped by any course of treatment he may subject himself to; without these a cure cannot be forced upon him save by absolute restraint. When science formulates a system of psychological chemistry, whose laboratories shall enable us to furnish moral qualities in solution, so that they may be administered subcutaneously, we shall then have specifics for drunkenness and for all sorts of immorality and crime. Indeed, I have sometimes wondered how long it will be before some charlatan more original than the rest, advertises a fluid containing the combined essence of virtue and intellect, the administration of which to all moral and mental delinquents shall destroy the wickedness of the world and reconstruct the feeble minded!

Quite recently proposals have been submitted to and seriously considered by the civil authorities of several large cities, for contracts to administer a certain well known "drink cure" to all drunkards who may be brought into court. If such proposals have not yet been accepted, I would suggest that the contracts be modified so that they shall be made to include the injection of some "anti

crime" solution into the inmates of all prisons and reformatories. I cannot see any greater absurdity in the one case than in the other. But to seriously discuss the specific absurdities of quackery is not a part of my task.

Briefly, and to recapitulate, there are three essentials in the combination which is to free society from quackery. Medicine must see to it that the right to the title, physician, is given to no man who is unworthy to receive the trust and to sustain the dignity which the title implies; suitable legislation must place before the gates of the medical profession those who shall rigorously and justly inspect the qualifications of all who apply for license to practise, rejecting such as are unfit, and lastly, education must furnish such knowledge as will enable all educated men to discriminate quackery and cause them not only to cease from being its dupes, but opening their eyes to it as an evil, make them its open foes. While the tendency is undoubtedly towards the fulfillment of the two first named conditions, the latter, which by depriving quackery of the support of its most powerful patrons would accomplish much more towards its destruction than the rest, seems almost hopelessly remote. I should be glad to hope that what I have written might at least arrest the attention of some of those who have it in their power to aid movements of reform, and perhaps persuade some of them that there is urgent need of such reform as I have suggested.

No less certain in its progress forward than the flight of Time itself is the advance of knowledge, of culture and of truth, albeit the advance is somewhat halting, impeded by many obstacles placed often in its path through evil, which has ever been a part of human nature. That sooner or later Truth has always prevailed and always will prevail is because the evil in humanity is less than the



good. Human passion and human motives will, perhaps, never change, but the time will surely come as we perfect the organization of our communities when it will be scarcely possible for men to receive license from their fellows to carry on a traffic so manifestly to the common detriment as the trade of quackery.

